

THE CONSEQUENCES OF EDWARD SNOWDEN NSA RELATED INFORMATION DISCLOSURES

Suné von Solms , Renier P van Heerden

Abstract: In June 2013, the Guardian newspaper started to disclose thousands of classified documents, which uncovered the existence of several mass surveillance programmes run by the National Security Agency (NSA) in the USA in cooperation with several European countries. These disclosures exposed a massive NSA clandestine electronic surveillance data program called PRISM as well as evidence of secret treaties amongst countries sharing surveillance data. The Guardian source was a NSA contractor, Edward Snowden, who was based in Hawaii. Edward Snowden is currently avoiding arrest after he initially fled to Hong Kong and then Russia. The leaks directly influenced US international relations in a negative manner, such as Brazil cancelling a state visit and Ecuador renouncing US trade benefits. The leaks had a financial impact on some of the massive US based IT companies; especially those who specialise in cloud based computing. Persons, companies and nations were affected by the leaks. Some secure email providers had to close down due to NSA and other government pressures to reveal their secret keys. The current estimation is that the US will lose between \$25 billion to \$35 billion in cloud computing based revenue due to Snowden's leaks. The trust in US based security professionals was also degraded after it was revealed that the NSA has pushed for flawed security standards. This will impact the status and US based security professionals in the future. In this paper we present a timeline of the Snowden related leaks, and discuss the reactions to these disclosures. We also explore the direct and indirect impact of these leaks. The consequences of these disclosures include strained foreign relationships, and the knowledge that mass surveillance programmes exists.

Keywords: Edward Snowden, Information Disclosures